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ADDRESS to the CLERGY

OF THE

CHURCH of ENGLAND in particular,

AND

To all CHRISTIANS in general,

HUMBLY PROPOSING

An Application to the Right Reverend the BISHOPS,
or through their Means to the Legislature, for such
Relief in the Matter of SUBSCRIPTION, as in their
Judgements they shall see proper : together with
the Author's Sentiments of the present Forms ;
and his Reasons for such an Application.

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Rector of Chislehurst in Kent.

THE SECOND EDITION.

*Quis nescit, primam—esse legem, ne quid falsi dicere
audeat? deinde, ne quid veri non audeat?*

Cic. de Orat.

L O N D O N :

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ADDRESS to the CLERGY, &c.

MA N as a rational Being, is accountable to *God* and his own *Conscience* for every secret *thought* and intent of his heart : but as a member of Society, he is accountable also to *Society* for his *Actions*.

In this light it is, that an obscure Brother now addresses you in the following pages : not to bring out of that obscurity the private sentiments of a private man ; but to give his reasons for presuming to take the lead in an affair, where it would be more becoming him to follow ; and where he will be very glad to give up the reins, as soon as ever he can induce any of superior rank and greater abilities to guide them. While his wishes were confined within his *own* breast or the small circle of his acquaintance, it would have been impertinent to have laid them before the public eye : but when he conceives hopes of engaging *others* to assist in bringing them to effect ; as they have a right to enquire into the rea-

sons of his conduct, so he can have no prospect of success but from their approbation of what he has to propose.

If they wish to know more of him than the *name* he bears; let him be known for one, whom free *choice* and a *desire* of doing good in his generation, led at first into the Ministry for which his friends and family had not intended him. How far he has succeeded in it, those who know him best can tell. They cannot charge him with want of attention to the duties of the office he has undertaken; and whatever his small abilities may be, they cannot say but he has exerted them in the station that has fallen to his lot.

That same *desire* has led him now to make his thoughts *public*. For though he is a sincere friend to the *Religious Establishment* in this kingdom, and does in general agree with its Professors in points of *Doctrine*; and though from his heart he greatly admires the *Liturgy*, which yet he thinks in some few particulars improveable; and though he is ready and willing at all times to testify his *general approbation* of both, in a fair and *candid* declaration either by word or writing; yet he must acknowledge he never could approve of the *Form* in which

that approbation is *now* required. It is a Stumbling-block that has offended many, and the reflection upon it has distressed him to a very great degree. Yet, as he has accepted of, and used that *Latitude* in the interpretation of the Articles, which their Defenders *allow of* and *vindicate*, and which yet is no where expressly *authorized*; he did not apprehend he had any right to disturb others with *his* sentiments, till he could see a prospect of getting those Forms amended.

But the late Petition to Parliament, and the Debates that have now been agitated among us for several months past, have greatly altered the Case; and that *Silence* which might be the private man's *Duty* before, seems to him now *blameable*. He did not enlist with the first movers; though he really believes they were actuated by a sincere and pious zeal for the cause of Christianity, and thinks a considerable share of praise will be due to them if any good arise from these debates: yet since he doubted from the first, whether their *method* of application for redress, though strictly legal, were the most proper one, or such as could be attended with any success; and since their *aim* appeared tending to more than in his heart he could desire, or than he judged it reasonable they should expect to obtain;

tain ; he did not join *them*, but from that time has never withheld *his* sentiments. *Duty* he thought then called upon him to make them *known*, to acquaint his ecclesiastical Superiors with his wishes; and bear his Testimony in a respectful manner to the propriety of an amendment. This he *did* : and this was all he then could do.

When appointed afterwards to preach before a meeting of the Clergy in his neighbourhood, he considered that as a farther call upon him to explain his sense of these matters. But though invited to make that discourse public ; he had no inclination to appear in print, till his doing so should be thought of service to the Cause of Truth. When it could ; that same regard to Duty which obliged him to deliver it, would oblige him to bring it forward.

That *Time* is now come. For as another application to Parliament, he understands, is now proposed on the same principles as the former ; and as several worthy Persons wish to see an alteration in *some* matters, and yet are unwilling to endanger the establishment by a *total* abolition of all that has generally been reckoned necessary to preserve its purity, and are unwilling also to join with those whose zeal has perhaps carried them

them too far, and yet are more unwilling to sit silent at a time when silence seems to be a betraying of *the Truth*; it has been suggested, that if an intercourse between such Persons could be established; who should consider of the most proper and respectful method of communicating their wishes in a body to their Superiors; that would be a bearing honourable testimony to the Truth, a farther justification of those Superiors if they have any design to propose Alterations, and the most likely way to induce them to forward what cannot and indeed ought not to be attempted without them.

This therefore he means, with all humility and deference to better judgements, to propose. And that the Public may previously become acquainted with the sentiments of the Proposer, and the reasons that have led him to think thus; he will now lay before them his general sense of these matters; whereby they will perceive, that he is clearly for an *alteration* in our *Subscriptions*, though not against *all* subscription in general (unless our Superiors in their wisdom see it right to lay that method wholly aside); and that he is for *amendments* in our *Liturgy* (the *use* of which ought, by some Promise rather than the fear of Penalties, to be enjoined on the clergy), but not
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for such alterations in it, as might hurt the devotions of the weaker brethren, or might endanger the spoiling of a venerable and excellent though improveable composition.

It has often been asserted of late, and is undoubtedly *true*, that the Holy Scriptures are the *sole Foundation* of the Belief and Practice of the true Christian; so that whatsoever is not to be learnt from *them*, ought not to be insisted upon as any necessary *term* of *acceptance* with *God*. This indeed, ever since the time that Inspiration ceased, *ought* to have been the *Rule* of Christianity: and though it was obscured during the days of Popery, is what was restored to us *as such* at the Reformation. By these Scriptures the Clergy are to frame their instructions, and both Clergy and Laity to form their Faith and Manners: and therefore according to our best abilities, both Clergy and Laity, we ought all of us to endeavour to understand them.

But notwithstanding the *Rule* be thus *uniform*, every man, the least conversant with what has passed in the world, must confess, that what has been drawn from these fountains, has at times been very *different* in many particulars: not owing usually to any wilful perversion of their true meaning

ing (which it is to be hoped has been rare); but to the naturally different turn of men's thoughts, which has led them to see things in very different lights.

This *Difference*, with respect to the bulk of mankind in general, is immaterial: because, if they endeavour sincerely to learn His will and practise accordingly, God "will accept according to what a man hath, "and not according to what he hath not:" and the *Private Christian*, though you may shew him what you think the better way than his own, can only believe according as the evidence strikes himself; and ought undoubtedly to be suffered to enjoy in *peace*, that liberty of conscience which can never be *taken* from him.

But with regard to *Teachers*, the case is widely different. Every man, however erroneous in his opinions though to a degree of insanity, is persuaded he is in the right; and if allowed to teach, provided he be sincere, will teach accordingly. As he cannot be his own Judge in this case, he must therefore in some way be examined by others, whether he be fit to be entrusted with such an Office: and ever since the time of the Apostles, who received their commission from Christ himself, the Rulers

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of every *Congregation*, as deriving the like authority from them, have been those Examiners.

This at first was deemed sufficient : and in Theory may be so still. But when afterwards the Governors of *Nations* became christian, and observed such a *diversity* of opinions as had arisen among mankind, they thought it necessary to interpose in this matter ; esteeming it their Duty to provide by some *farther* Examination, that the Christian Religion be taught in their several kingdoms in the *purest Manner*. In this surely they should seem to be right. And hence of course it is, that the Legislators of every Country do take care to have it taught in that Manner they judge most pure, and do naturally give their countenance to such Teachers * as are of their *own* sentiments ; while

* By *Teachers*, the author here means the *Clergy* in particular, who are his consideration at present. But though he reckons that the *Laity*, whether in or out of either University, *ought not* to be called upon to subscribe *any* articles ; yet where they are Heads of Houses or Tutors in it, or School-masters out of it on any public Foundation, they *ought* to give some such assurance as the clergy that they approve of the *established Religion*. That *Line* is sufficiently drawn by the act of uniformity : and though, it is to be hoped, the *Form* of subscribing will be altered ; yet he thinks that line should be *kept up*. The Universities themselves might then take off all the *rest*.

while those who are of a *different* persuasion, examine and encourage Teachers who think like themselves: and as long as those *Dissenters* from *any* Establishment, interfere not with the *Peace* of the state, or the *Property* of individuals, or proceed not to the subverting the *Foundations* of Christianity; they should be suffered so to do.

Now in *this* Examination, some general *Test* has always been thought proper to be offered to the candidates for Orders or Preferments in *every* congregation, for them to subscribe or declare, as an assurance that they *agree* with their governors in *opinion*. Neither does this seem to be an unreasonable Method, provided it be properly regulated and rightly understood. The *Test* so proposed, cannot in a Protestant Church be considered as a *Rule of Faith*; but as it were a *Rule of Discipline*, and as an explanation of *their* manner of understanding the outlines of Doctrine. Every Minister when appointed is indeed a *Minister of Christ*; and as such, is bound to teach pure Christianity, as he himself finds it in the Holy Scriptures and not *solely* in any Comments of fallible men. The *Bible* is his *only Rule of Faith*; as it must be to every consistent *Protestant*. But if in his conscience he agrees with the Congregation of any Church in their method

of understanding that Rule; it is then no *restraint* upon him, no abridgement of his Liberty, or his Commission derived from Christ; to *subscribe* to their *Terms*, and receive their *Emoluments*. Those *Terms* indeed, should not descend to more particulars, or be more confined, than absolute *necessity* requires; because, if they be such that in his Conscience he cannot agree to all that the State *really expects* from him; or *bonâ fide* keep in that Opinion as he advances in his Studies, (of which he himself alone must be the judge) he ought neither to submit to such a *restraint* at his first entrance, nor continue under it afterwards.

These are *general Truths*; and common to *all establishments*. Let us now apply them to our *own*.

The *Church of England*, our national Church (or the State; for in this respect they may be considered as the same), proposes on her part such Terms of Communion as to her appear right. All that she can design by this, is only to give such heads of *doctrine* as a guide to her Prelates, what particular points *she* requires of them to enquire into; *besides* the general and more important and purely christian ones, of a good *life* and sound *learning* and *abilities* for

for the several offices to be undertaken. As to the *Terms*; They are only to see that they are *complied* with: the Compliers are to see that they do it with a safe conscience. But as to the *life* and *abilities* (under which must be reckoned an earnest *desire* to do their duty); their examinations one should think scarcely could be too strict. The former, was only an enquiry, whether the Candidates might be received as Teachers in the *national* Church: but this, whether they be proper to be admitted into *any* church at all, as Ministers of Christ.

The *latter* is no part of our consideration at present. Else it might be lamented, that in the present state of affairs, a sufficient number are not induced to offer themselves out of whom to make any *choice*: so that our Bishops find themselves (to their sorrow) necessitated, to remit somewhat of that *Strictness* they would think right to use; in admitting Persons to be Ministers of Christ, or committing any part of his Flock to their Care.

But with respect to the *former*, or the *Terms of Subscription*; they are become an occasion of grief on another account: which however is now under consideration,

ation, and it is to be hoped may *at last* obtain redress.

I shall not at present enquire what have been the Methods in former times, or how far justifiable. We are a Reformed Church, and can justify our departure from the superstition of the Church of Rome, and as such can justify our using *some* method to declare our abhorrence of Popery. This was the origin of *our* Terms, which need be traced back no farther than *the Reformation*. About that time our *Articles* were framed. About that time our *Liturgy* was compiled. If now we reflect, that those Compilers had themselves been brought up in Popery, and had imbibed most of her errors in their childhood; we shall wonder rather that they could persuade themselves to throw off *so much* of her *Superstition*, than that they should still retain too much, not of Popery it is to be hoped, but of the *prejudices* of their education and the turn of those times. Thanks be to the Almighty, He gave them the heart to undertake it, and ability to perform what they did. They did not, as was too natural, reject indiscriminately every thing whether good or bad, because it had been used in the Romish Church, and “root up the wheat together with the

“tares;” but distinguished them carefully, and from all the best Liturgies of ancient times, selected the choicest Forms, and framed one though perhaps not quite perfect, yet we may venture to say the most perfect that ever was in established use. This with *few* alterations since is our present *Liturgy*.

At the same time they drew up a set of *Articles*; containing what they considered as the *Fundamentals* of Christianity, declaring against those Ceremonies and Doctrines of the church of Rome from which they had so justly departed, deciding many abstruse metaphysical questions then agitated (which indeed scarcely ought to be *decided*, much less, *insisted upon*) and retaining perhaps some things which long use had sanctified, leaving it to their Successors to rectify them likewise. And these with almost *no* alteration are the *Articles* we still retain.

Now from this account we see, we have great reason to be thankful to those of our Ancestors, who did *so much* for us. Were *they* to do it now, and had they the farther light, which after two centuries' experience and two centuries' advancement in learning, has shone upon *us*; they certainly would frame those Models differently,

differently, and more conformably to their encrease of knowledge. This task then is left for *us*: and what we now *lament*, is, that in this age we still are obliged to *subscribe* and declare our *unfeigned* approbation and *assent* to, this *antiquated* Model.

If it here be asked; Why was this not done before? Why delayed so long? The answer is obvious. It was *difficult*. Not only religious differences; but civil diffensions, party prejudices, and warmth and passion and *politics*, introduced themselves into a matter of *conscience*; and discouraged many attempts, and defeated others. The same may be the case again, if Discretion and Temper be wanting. Indeed the Times are fairer for it than they have ever been. It is not a matter that concerns one Party rather than another in the State; unless we rashly divide ourselves into Parties about it. For it is not any *authority* of our Governors that now is called in question; but some *abstruse* and perhaps *unnecessary* doctrines in our Articles, and some *few* passages in our Liturgy, and above all the *Form* of subscribing both, that are objected against. Besides, the nature of *Toleration* is now better understood: all points religious as well as civil are more freely discussed, and more liberally considered.

considered. This, at the same time that it renders it more *necessary*, will render any alteration more easy of *reception* too; unless the warmth of its advocates should create it enemies, and stir them up to equal warmth against every thing that may be proposed. In that case our *Superiors*, who, from their liberal turn of mind and the advances they have made in learning, would gladly not only *lend a hand* to wipe off these *Blemishes*, but one might expect would *exert* themselves to *perfect* the Reformation among us; if they see their Clergy running into *Faction* or indecent *Heat*, will naturally endeavour (and perhaps will do right) to check that heat by the continuance of *Palliatives*, rather than hazard the destruction of christian Charity by attempting a *Cure*.

They cannot but see, and do indeed acknowledge, the *propriety* of an *amendment* as strongly as any of us: but their high station and rank in life, lets them see more strongly the dangerous consequences of Confusion. *They* may not all be of one mind any more than *ourselves*; and yet their truly Episcopal Temper may make them less sanguine, and less tenacious of their own opinions, and more ready to defer to those of others. They know that

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some *Test* or trial of a man's sentiments, has always been thought necessary in *every* church; and that no *great* nation will long have a succession of able Ministers in *hers*, unless there be some Establishment to support them, and induce them to undertake that office; for "the labourer is worthy of his hire." They know that such a *Test*, either must be very *simple* in its Terms, or must be *altered* from time to time as new lights arise, or must after a while be used almost as a mere form, with great *latitude* of interpretation. These things they cannot but know well. And then, as to the *Liturgy*: they know that it is proper there should be a prescribed Form of worship. They know the form we have is a most excellent composition, though improveable. They know they have in their hands a set of alterations, prepared at the end of the last century, by some of the most shining lights our church ever had to boast of; which though defeated then through party warmth, might now again be offered and made the foundation of farther improvements. This too they know well. And as they stand upon an eminence, whence they command a more extensive prospect; if we their Inferiors would explain our wishes fairly to them, they must *know* better than ourselves how to

to remove our Difficulties, and to put things on the most *proper* footing. This, as Christians, they would certainly be *willing* to do; and as Protestants, and as Bishops, and as part of the supreme Legislature in this kingdom, they would be *ready* to grant a request so reasonable.—To *grant* I should not say. 'Tis not in *them* to *grant*. Else no doubt, they would give unsolicited a more *liberal* Form of subscription at least; which might need no palliatives and *forced constructions*, disgraceful to our Church, and distressing always to every honest and ingenuous mind. Yet it is in *Them* to *propose*, and from them it *best* will come; and they cannot surely but be zealous and earnest to *procure* from the rest of the Legislature, what they feel to be so *just* and *reasonable* and (may not one add?) so *necessary*. And as to *Difficulties*; there is a Time in every disease when *palliatives* will no longer do, but a *Cure* must be ventured, even at the expence of the limb diseased. To delay beyond that time, is *Timidity*, not *Prudence*. Whether that Time be come, belongs not to the *Novice* but the *Experienced* to *decide*.

It has been, and indeed is still, objected by some of pious and respectable characters; that however *proper* it might be to

make amendments, yet we are for ever *restrained* by the Act of Union from doing it. This however, has fully been answered already by abler hands than mine. I shall only beg leave to confirm their *Arguments* by an appeal to *Fact*. The Church of Scotland *did* establish her Formula of subscription *after* that Union: and we may surely take the same liberty to alter and *amend* ours, which she has done *before* to *appoint* her's.

Let us then hope, that our *Superiors* will see this to be the *Time* for doing it; and let us pray to *GOD* to give them success in it. And now, since the pious zeal of some of our brethren has opened the cause; let us to a christian *Meekness* add a christian *Fortitude*; nor discourage a most laudable attempt by an *indifference* on the one hand, nor defeat it by an *over-eagerness* on the other.

It is certain that all do not think alike, in these any more than other matters. Some may still reckon all those scholastic Definitions *right* and *proper*; some few may perhaps esteem them *necessary*; more may be afraid of *alterations*. Let us not be so unchristian, as to charge them with ignorance or inattention or perverseness; because they do not see things as we do:
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neither let them be so unchristian, as to wish to continue the use of a yoke that galls us, though it may fit them; when a lighter and more simple and more conformable to the burthen of Christ, would sit easy upon both. Neither of us surely, can be so void of humanity or conscience or integrity ourselves, as to choose to drive others to the painful necessity of appearing to maintain, that Form of Subscription which in their hearts they cannot defend.

But notwithstanding *Duty* thus calls on us, not to inveigh against our Superiors or our Equals, though they differ from us on the *whole* or in the *manner* or in the *extent* of what they desire; yet while we have *Charity* towards *Them*, it requires us to do *Justice* to the cause of *Truth*. Some of our Brethren have applied, and are expected to apply again, to the Legislature for redress. Let us therefore now step forward: and, though we cannot go hand in hand with them, let us assist them as far as we may. Let us, with respectful confidence, address ourselves to *that Bench*, through whose interposition relief is regularly to be expected: and as their "Moderation is known unto all men," let us explain to them *our wishes*, and confide in *their prudence* for obtaining the most *proper* redress.

redress for us. This is but due to our *Prelates*. For as, during the late recess of Parliament, they have had time to digest these matters; and there is *reason* to hope, that they have revolved it in their thoughts *how* to effect what is *best*; so it cannot but be a proper piece of *respect* in us, that we should assure them of our good wishes, and our prayers for the success of so pious an undertaking. Let us then shew them *who* we are that wish it, and *what* we look for at their hands. Let us entreat them, *That we may no longer have a set of Articles that aggrieve ourselves: though we have no objection to the subscribing fairly, such a reasonable form, as shall be thought necessary to secure a Protestant Church, against its being committed to the care of the Papist or the Unbeliever. That our Liturgy, though now so excellent, may be rendered yet more pure; by correcting every remaining blemish, and removing or leaving indifferent all we can that gives offence to others. That our Church may thus become a pattern to all churches. And that if those who now dissent from us, will not then accept of our Terms, or imitate our Example; we may however have the satisfaction of having done our Duty, by yielding on our parts all that in Prudence we may.*

Or if this be too great a *happiness* to be thought attainable; let us *trust*, that we shall

at least get removed that Form of Subscription, which in its present state, requires such a Latitude in a solemn act, as no honest man would allow himself to use in any other Contract, however trifling.

But it belongs not to the Proposer to dictate, what shall be the particulars of our Address. That, he hopes, will be considered by his Brethren; *if* they shall see it proper to join him, and accept his proffered services. He will be ready to receive their commands, left with the publisher; and to meet those, who shall be willing to consider the matter, and prepare the *Form* of such an *application*.

In the mean time he has thus delivered his sentiments; that, however his Proposal may succeed, which will depend upon their concurrence; he may have borne his *Testimony* as an individual.

And now to the LORD he commits it; in full assurance, that He who “worketh in us both to will and to do,” will assist all our pious endeavours; and if the measure we are now upon, be a right measure, will bring it to a happy conclusion.

F I N I S.

IN consequence of a late Address to the Clergy already in many hands; a small meeting has privately been held, to consider of the most proper method of carrying its proposal into execution, without giving umbrage to any one by too numerous applications. No settled form of Words for such an Application to the Bench, was then determined upon; only in general, that the Request should be for a Revival of the Articles and Liturgy and the Forms of Subscription, professing at the same time, the greatest regard for the present happy Church Establishment. But, that they might proceed with all proper deference and caution; it was the sense of the Members present, previously to any farther step, that two of their number should wait upon the Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and communicate to him their wishes and intentions; and to consult his Grace upon the propriety of such a measure; how far their Lordships would approve of it, or whether they would choose rather to move in the affair unsolicited.

THEY waited upon his Grace accordingly; who replied in terms of candour to their intentions; that he would lay their wishes before his Brethren, as soon after the Holidays as there should be a sufficient number in Town; and in the mean time desired, that the matter might await their determination: That he took it for granted there were many of the Clergy of the same Opinion; and that this Application would suffice for the present.

ALL farther proceedings therefore are deferred till their Lordships' pleasure shall be known. In the mean while this is circulated, to inform the Clergy of what has been done; that they may not suppose the matter is wholly dropped, while it only remains suspended; and to desire that those who are well-wishers to the Cause in hand, will express their approbation of the Scheme proposed in Mr. *Wollaston's* pamphlet, by continuing to send their Names to the Author, or to *J. Wilkie*, the Publisher, at No. 71, in *St. Paul's Church Yard*.

London, Dec. 23, 1772.



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